

Seventh Sunday after Pentecost July 31, 2011

Isaiah 55:1-5 "Come and Get It! Free Wine and Cheese!"

When I was growing up on a farm, there were a lot of mouths to feed. There were seven of us in our family – 2 parents and 5 kids. When meal time was approaching, there was a lot of work to do. Most of the time I was hiding from it, but I always got called to do something. Finally, when it was time to eat, the call would go out, "Dinner's ready. Come and get it." And suddenly we all appeared.

There were other mouths to feed on the farm. We raised beef cattle. They would graze the fields and keep the field grass mostly cut from all they ate. They also got out of their fences sometimes and enjoyed some of my father's Kentucky blue grass, which made a lot more work for us getting them back in the fences again. Anyway, when it began to get cold, it was also time to feed the cattle the hay we made during the summer. We would load hay in the truck and drive it out in the field and call, "Come and get it!" After awhile, you didn't even have to call. The cattle would see the truck and chase it. Later we would find them already at the designated feeding spot waiting for us.

There was yet another mouth to feed - Scott, our Border Collie. We had him from a puppy. We actually had another dog first, named Lady. My father flew her up from Kentucky to help him herd up the cattle. The problem was that shortly after she arrived we found out she had not come alone. She gave birth to about 7 puppies. Then we had a lot more mouths to feed, and of course the call would go out, "Come and get it," once they were old enough to run after the food.

In today's Old Testament reading today, God sends out a call to us. God says, "Come." If you are thirsty, come. If you are hungry, come. And just like the call went out to me in my childhood to "Come and get it" at dinner time, and it came at no cost to me, so there is no cost for what God has to give us to eat and drink. The food he has prepared for us is free. Come and get it.

It's no surprise to us that God provides the food we eat and the beverages we drink every day. Everything we need each day comes from God's gracious hands. He provides food to eat, drink, clothing, shelter, security, good government, family, and much more. All these things God provides us because he made us and he loves us. He made this creation, and he still takes care of it. And even when we are not on God's side, like many were not on Christ's side and called for his crucifixion, God still graciously provides what we need for each day.

God also provides the spiritual nourishment we need each day. He pours out the waters of baptism on us and we are refreshed, and our spiritual thirst for God is satisfied. He feeds us with his Word and Sacraments, and we are refreshed and made new. He feeds us these things, and gives us forgiveness and spiritual refreshment through them, without any charge to us. God provides everything we need.

Sometimes people forget that God is responsible for their daily bread each day. Sometimes we too can forget. We go about our daily work. We get our pay check or social security. We go to the bank and make our deposits, and then we withdraw cash or use our debit card. We buy our food, take it home, cook and eat it. And then the cycle begins all over again. We are so used to this process of making a living that we can lose sight of the God who gives us the ability to make the money to provide for our needs. God is ultimately the one who provides for all our physical needs.

Even when it comes to spiritual things people can become sidetracked and lose focus, and God does not even have a place in their lives. They find it very reasonable to pay a spiritual advisor to tell them what they want to hear rather than open themselves up to the free gifts that God has to give in Jesus Christ. They are spiritually hungry, but they will spend their money on things that will never bring spiritual satisfaction. They remain trapped in their sins, and thus they remain hungry and thirsty before God.

God provides the food for our body each day, but God has prepared an even better meal for us. This food satisfies our spiritual hunger and thirst now, and it will satisfy us for eternity. It is a food that does not enter through our mouths, but through our ears. This food is God's spoken Word in Jesus Christ.

This Word tells us that Jesus has taken from us our sins of doubt, our spiritual blindness, our actual sins, and our sinful nature. He took all our sins to the cross with him where he suffered the punishment we deserve for our sins. After he received the full wrath of God for our sins, he died and was buried. On the third day he rose again from the dead, and he declares to you today that you have the entire forgiveness of your sins. While food and drink are certainly important for this body in this life, God has provided the message of Christ as food for our souls that will never leave us spiritually hungry.

God gives us this good spiritual food because of a promise he once made to David in the Old Testament. David was a leader for the people whom God raised up to become king of Israel. He loved God with his whole heart; and though some of his sins are recorded in the Bible, he repented of them and received forgiveness for his disobedience.

God promised David that a son of his would always be on Israel's throne. God fulfilled his promise when Jesus entered our world as Messiah and king. Now this Son of David, Jesus the Messiah, rules forever in heaven, and now with his Word in this world.

God has made an everlasting covenant also with you. When you became a child of God through the waters of baptism, you were bound to God as one. God has set his heart on you, and God will never let you go. He gives you his Word and sacraments to strengthen you and your faith in Christ.

This Word of Christ is for all people. All people enter life as sinners, and God holds out to our world the Word of Christ so that many more can come to faith and receive forgiveness and eternal life. In the second reading today Paul writes about how the Gospel message is for the Jewish person and for the Gentile, or non-Jewish person. The Word of Christ is for the Christian and for the not-yet-Christian. We are sent to bring the good news of Jesus to everyone we meet. God so loved the world that he saves and forgives you, and he wants to save and forgive our neighbors, too. You might be the very one that God can use to bring a not-yet-Christian to saving faith in Christ.

When Jesus fed over 5000 people on one occasion when he had only five loaves of bread and two fish, he showed how much he cares about our physical needs. When Jesus died on the cross for our sins and rose again from the dead to give us forgiveness and eternal life, he proved how much he cares for our deep spiritual needs. Christ has done everything possible at the cross spiritually to satisfy you. Come and get it, freely given for you.

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